



PHYSICIANS LAUNCH CALL TO STRENGTHEN AND PROTECT MEDICARE

New Pan-Canadian Doctors' Organization Born

(Ottawa, May 29, 2006) -- As we approach the first anniversary of the Supreme Court of Canada's Chaoulli decision, Canadian Doctors for Medicare (CDM) is calling for their 60,000 physician colleagues to strengthen and protect public access to high-quality healthcare.

The newly-formed physician organization launched its membership drive and website in Ottawa this morning. www.canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca

“Our fundamental message to our colleagues and to governments is that publicly-funded healthcare is not only more equitable than a two tier system; it is also more efficient and results in the highest quality of care,” said Dr. Danielle Martin, a Toronto family doctor and chair of the Board of CDM. “A single-payer system for physician and hospital services is the best way to serve our patients. We support a system based on need, not on the ability to pay.”

CDM Board members said today they are alarmed by the potential repercussions of the Supreme Court ruling that a citizen of Quebec may use private insurance for some medically necessary physician and hospital care. Over time this may open the door for two-tier health care to become the acceptable Canadian standard, increasing wait times for most Canadians and leading to higher healthcare costs.

Dr Simon Turcotte, a General Surgery resident in Montreal and Chair of Médecins pour l'accès à la santé added “As representatives of doctors in Quebec supporting our publicly-funded Régime publique, we are pleased to be working with our counterparts across Canada to strengthen Medicare for our patients.”

The CDM Board is comprised of physicians in diverse areas of medicine, at every stage of their careers and from every region of Canada. Through national leadership and the actions of local members, CDM plans to be active to help ensure that health system reforms remain true to the intent of the Canada Health Act and do not include the option of private insurance for physician and hospital services.

Dr Tom Noseworthy, a critical care physician and CDM Board member from Calgary, said, “We recently witnessed a close call with Alberta's Third Way reforms. Our patients need us to stand up for them.”

Dr. Martin said, “Many Canadians don't have access to a family doctor. Many more know a friend or family member who has waited too long for a diagnostic test or treatment. The emergence of a parallel private tier would only make these problems worse for most of our patients. These problems are best solved within the framework of universally accessible, publicly funded Medicare.”

Dr Noseworthy concluded, “Medicare has proven to be the highest expression of Canadians caring for one another. It represents sound public policy, is rooted in Canadian values, and is readily sustainable. In physician’s terms, Medicare is good for your health.”

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